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*INEXPLICATA is the official journal of the **Institute of Hispanic Ufology**, an organization dedicated to increasing and promoting information and awareness on UFO and paranormal research in Spain, the Caribbean, Central and South America.*

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A Year For Reflection and Reconstruction...

It is still hard to believe that only twelve months ago we were embarking on the greatest cattle mutilation wave in South America since people began to notice their animals were being killed in curious ways. The mutilations faded toward the end of last summer and were replaced with other paranormal phenomena, such as the Bigfoot or *ucumar zupai* haunting the lovers' lanes of the town of Rosario in northern Argentina.

Five months into 2003, the overall activity seems to have been reduced from the mad torrent of last year to the scarcest trickle, giving us a chance to sit back and reflect upon the mutilation wave and consider other cases which we may have missed along the way.

This issue of INEXPLICATA does not seek to become a trip down memory lane but rather a pause to reflect and reconstruct cases that occurred years ago but only came to our attention in recent years. We hope that they are as interesting to you as they are to us.

The Institute of Hispanic Ufology is pleased to welcome two new contributing editors to INEXPLICATA: José M. García Bautista, an energetic and active investigator from southern Spain, and Guillermo Giménez, whose work on the Neuquén sightings in Argentina was featured on IHU's old website.

The economic *realpolitik* of our times forced IHU to close down its website at inexplicata.com and go for a more modest one at www.inexplicata.us which we hope you will continue to visit. As time progresses, it may be possible to add new features to the site.

Scott Corrales
Institute of Hispanic Ufology
Cinco de mayo, 2003

*With his partner Rafael Cabello, **José M. García Bautista** has written dozens of articles cataloguing UFO and paranormal activity in Spain's Andalusia region. Headquartered in the magical city of Seville, José Manuel has gathered information, interviewed witnesses, taken on the UFO establishment and exposed hoaxes. This is his first contribution to INEXPLICATA.*

The Seville UFO Sightings 1999

by José M. García Bautista

What follows is a list of the latest events studied during the month of September 1999 in the city of Seville and its environs. Sightings of a fraudulent, erratic or confusing nature have been discarded, as have those which can be explained from a rational point of view. This researcher seeks to report the following:

1st sighting:

September 4th, 1999 (Saturday)

Cornisa del Aljarafe, locality of Puebla del Rio (25 km. from Seville)

Time: 21:45 (approx.)

Witnesses: Juan Alcalde Moreno and Soledad Sánchez

Weather: Clear, very good and warm temperature.

Sighting: Two natives of Seville from the community of Puebla del Rio were able to see from their vehicle a very bright light traveling in the sky with a northerly direction (Gerena-Aznalcóllar, El Ronquillo, etc...) The light followed an anomalous trajectory, "hopping and skipping," as per the witnesses' description while maintaining a constant greenish coloring. The object emitted a bright light which stood out in the Sevillian sunset. It continued its route without any alterations except for the "skips". The sighting lasted approximately 30 seconds, after which the strange luminous point ceased to shine and vanished. The possibility of a weather balloon was discarded.

2nd Sighting:

September 8, 1999 (Wednesday)

Sierra Norte de Sevilla, locality of Alanís (115 km. from Seville)

Time: 23:20 hrs.

Witness: Antonio Vargas

Time: Unsettled, rather cool and somewhat cloudy.

Sighting: Mr. Antonio Vargas was returning to Alanís along a highway from a small estate where he keeps animals and had gone to "give them a quick runaround", in other words, to take care of them and insure that all was well. Turning around one of the numerous curves on this road, the witness was able to see luminous dots over a small hill. They were three powerful orange lights, which would form a triangle if linked in a single line. The artifact appeared to fly slowly and silently over the terrain. Eventually it flew over him and took off vertiginously into the sky. After reconnoitering the premises in person and taking advantage of a family visit to the town of Constantina (near Alanís), I must remark that there are no marks to be found on the ground (although the rain could have played a factor in

this) and I discount the possibility of air traffic over the sector.

3rd Sighting:

September 9, 1999 (Wednesday)

Embalse del Retortillo in the Sierra Norte of Seville, next to the locality of Las Navas de la Concepción (some 100 km. from the capital).

Witnesses: María José Rodríguez, Francisco Ortega, María del Robledo García.

Time: Cloudy and cold.

Sighting: Three witnesses were able to observe a cloudy formation of the ones known as "lenticular clouds", being discoidal in shape and large in size (between 400 and 600 meters, according to eyewitness calculations). The strange cloudy formation was highly luminous and moved erratically, although the wind direction in the upper layers of our atmosphere do not necessarily coincide with the direction in the lower layers. I think that this has a natural explanation and that it falls under atmospheric phenomena.

4th Sighting:

September 15, 1999 (Wednesday)

Carretera C-432 between the Seville-Cádiz Expressway and the community of Lebrija

Witnesses: Rosa Montero and Pilar Castillo

Time: 15:30 hrs. (approx.)

Weather: Good; agreeable temperatures and good visibility.

Sighting: Our two witnesses were able to see a strange elongated object having the shape of a "sausage" or "cigar" suspended in the sky over a field near Lebrija. The object did not seem to move and its motion--if any--was imperceptible. Our witnesses estimate its length at 100 meters. The object was lost from sight after following its course, without giving the appearance of moving or changing position. The curious circumstance arises that sightings are numerous along this stretch of the road from Lebrija to Trebuena, Sanlúcar de Barrameda to Chipiona and to Rota (the last four locations belonging to the locality of Cádiz).

5th Sighting:

September 18, 1999 (Saturday)

Aznalcóllar - El Castillo de las Guardas, Seville (some 40 km.)

Witnesses: Francisco López and Agustín Baena

Time: 22:00 hours (approx.)

Weather: Poor. Strong wind and rain; unpleasant temperature.

Sighting: Our two witnesses were on their way back to Seville from Sierra de Huelva when they made out a bright shape in the sky. It issued lights whose colors alternated between green, light blue and yellow-orange. Its trajectory was irregular, since it traced strange closed angles of between 75 and 90 degrees, amazing our witnesses, who first attributed this to the instability and the inclement weather. The object appeared headed to the East, which is to say, from Huelva to Seville, crossing the so-called "Magnetic Triangle" (Gerena-Aznalcóllar-Castillo de las Guardas). Its speed was swift, since it took 40 seconds to cross our witnesses' line of sight, taking into consideration its brilliance as a reference point in the

distance. The road was empty due to the unpleasant climactic conditions, which poured some 60/m2 of rain over Seville. This could be attributed to some meteorological or luminous phenomenon or perhaps even a celestial phenomenon or error of perception by the witnesses, but the "UFO nature" of the region leads us to think that much more could have been going on, since there are numerous reports of this kind to be found there, and many witnesses claim having seen strange objects and flights in the area, among them prestigious ufologists such as Joaquín Mateos Nogales or Ignacio Darnaude Rojas.

These are the latest sightings that this researcher has been aware of in the locality of Seville and its environs. The cases included in this report are the ones most liable to be unidentified flying objects. What is missing is confirmation from INTA regarding tests over the area. We know that Seville Flight Control confirms the presence of flights during those days but not over those areas. The sighting of September 18, 1999 lends itself to confusion, since the Gerena area is an air corridor for the San Pablo Airport in Seville. In spite of this, the object's eccentric trajectory and the strange luminous colors it emitted appear to discard the hypothesis or possibility of attributing it to some artifact of terrestrial manufacture. These cases HAVE NOT BEEN EXPLAINED. Certain possibilities have been put forward, but they remain POSSIBILITIES whose certainty or rejection is pending confirmation.

Other sightings have been reported in the area, but after a sober and deep analysis of same, they have been rejected due to a natural, atmospheric or other explanation was found. Some day I shall write further about errors in perception and confusion, including hysteria, in the face of what people took for UFOs.

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The world's military establishment and UFOs have had an uneasy relationship since the late 1940's. The situation involving Spanish-speaking countries is equally complex.

Military Implications of UFOs in Latin America and Spain *by Scott Corrales*

On Wednesday, November 27, 2002, a flight of Lockheed F-16 interceptors was launched to investigate what was described by a NORAD spokesman as "a trail of condensation" moving from the Caribbean Sea toward the United States. This contrail apparently alerted the Air Space Command, located in Colorado Springs, that a rogue aircraft or missile may have been fired toward a target in the continental U.S. The fighters reached the indicated coordinates, but were unable to find the source of the contrail.

Only a few months earlier, in July 2002, reports of an unexplained object zooming low over suburban Washington D.C. caused yet another "scramble" - one of hundreds since the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The

military, fearing any possible aerial attack, was taking no chances against the possibility of another similar incident--this time in the nation's capital. The media did not mention that 50 years previous, almost to the day, fighters had unsuccessfully tried to reach the UFOs that sailed leisurely past the dome of the U.S. Capitol.

It is almost inevitable: in a world as thoroughly militarized as our own, with openly declared wars and high- and low-intensity conflicts raging over five continents, jet fighters--the pride and first line of defense of a country's sovereign airspace--are also the first official committee to deal with the unknown. Since the development of high-speed interceptors in WWII, aircraft of many nations have had brushes with the still-unexplained aerial phenomena known as UFOs. In some cases, the prudent response has been to shadow the intruders and photograph their movements with the interceptor's gun camera (the source of many intriguing stills and movies dealing with the phenomenon. In others, authorization to open fire has been granted, prompting a wide range of responses from the intruder. Sometimes the unknown object simply zooms out of reach, sometimes it disappears. Upon occasion, the "uncorrelated target" shoots back with devastating results.

The Mexican Air Force and the UFO Question

In October 1995, in the initial rush of excitement over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a U.S. military delegation visited Mexico City for a low-key but highly important opportunity: changing the Mexican military's perception of the U.S. from that of an aggressor to more of a partner. William Perry, Secretary of Defense under the Clinton Administration, and General Barry McCaffrey, met with their Mexican counterparts and proposed "bringing together the mechanisms for a joint struggle...and a better exchange of both equipment and armaments."

Secretary Perry took advantage of a ceremony at a Mexican military base to state that one of the crucial components of this new joint struggle--ostensibly in the war against drugs--included improved air defenses, something that had never been stressed before. Like most Latin American air forces, Mexico had relied heavily on T-33 fighters (used for training purposes by the USAF) and some newer purchases from Europe. Might it be too bold to suppose that the Pentagon's request that our southern neighbor "beef up" its air defenses have something to do with the UFO activity experienced earlier in the decade?

Given its long history of animosity toward the U.S. military (a result of the wars of 1845-47 and the early 20th century incursions into Northern Mexico by Gen. Sam Pershing, not to mention the siege of Veracruz), the Mexican military establishment had never been worked intimately with the Pentagon. Mexico's history of encounters between unidentified flying objects and aircraft begins only a few years after Kenneth Arnold's historic 1947 sighting over Mount Rainier: on March 3, 1950, a Mexican aviation official engaged in a routine tour of inspection of the airports in the northern regions of the country when he saw a curious yellowish disk suspended at an estimated altitude of 15,000 feet over the city of Chihuahua's airport. A press report indicated that two airplanes--whether

military or civilian--tried to intercept the object but were unable to reach it.

Mexican author and ufologist Carlos Alberto Guzmán Rojas has collected a wealth of encounters between aviators and UFOs in his book *Los OVNIS y la Aviación Mexicana* (Mexico:TM, 2001). While focusing mainly on civilian airliner encounters, Guzmán also includes some notable military encounters, some of them dating back to the early 1960s, when a Douglas C-54 belonging to the FAM (acronym for Fuerza Aérea Mexicana, the Mexican air force) had a mid-air UFO encounter during a cross-border flight to Texas on a mission to secure matériel: a silver saucer flew alongside the cargo plane over the Gulf of Mexico, less than two thousand feet off the starboard wing. The intruder finally peeled off when the C-54 was about to land at a U.S. base. The crew was so unnerved by the experience, and so fearful of reprisals if the matter was broached either at the U.S. base or back in Mexico, that it was years before anyone discussed the encounter openly.

In November 1978, a spectacular UFO incident occurred over Mexico City: thousands looked on as subsonic T-33's launched from the Santa Lucía AFB, home of the 202nd Fighter Wing, the one nearest to the Aztec capital, tried to catch up with a disk-shaped, multi-hued and windowed craft at around 7:45 p.m.. Nine Lockheed T-33 did their level best to intercept the intruder, which seemed to remain at a safe distance from the fighters' twenty-millimeter guns.

Although no clear-cut connection can be made, the protracted Mexican UFO wave of the mid-1970s may have caused the government to see the need to upgrade its hardware. In 1982, the FAM ordered the creation of the Escuadrón Aéreo 401 (401st Fighter Wing), charging it with safeguarding the integrity of the nation's airspace. Delivery of the first of several Northrop F-5 E/F jet fighters took place on the very same year as Mexico went on a buying spree: Antonov heavy cargo planes, Israeli-built Arava aircraft and Swiss Pilatus C-7 trainers. While these military expenditures could be seen as a result of the country's oil boom in the late '70s and early '80s, it is still interesting that a country with no clear-cut adversaries should behave thus. None of Mexico's neighbors to the south (Guatemala and Belize) have long-range air power; to the north it faces the air supremacy of the United States and to the east, Cuba's Soviet-era MIGs. But if the hypothesis presented in this article has any truth to it, the Mexican government has not succeeded in inspiring confidence among people who work in aviation.

Carlos Guzmán and Alfonso Salazar interviewed Enrique Kolbeck, a senior air traffic controller at Mexico City's Benito Juárez airport. When asked his opinion on the FAM's record of UFO interception, Kolbeck was skeptical. "Without being pejorative, our air force is not developed, it isn't the type of air force able to make interceptions, as do other air forces. The priorities of the persons in charge do not extend to UFOs, I think. Perhaps there is an arrangement between governments so that every time a strange object falls in our Mexico, another country can take it away to engage in research on it."

Events such as the one which occurred on March 23, 1999 clearly indicate why any country would want to avail itself of some means of "credible response" to unknown forces. Between 6:15 and 6:30 that evening, an elongated flying object measuring

an astounding 2 kilometers in length and shaped like an office building was reported to the Benito Juarez airport tower. Enshrouded in clouds, the flying behemoth remained over the Texcoco Dry Lake and was clearly seen by nearly two dozen airport mechanics who were waiting to service a flight arriving from Acapulco.

This story, which appeared in Mexico's *La Prensa* newspaper, was never officially confirmed. However, air traffic controller Enrique Kolbeck made reference to a similar case which occurred some years earlier to the north of Mexico City and involving an object so large to be classified as "hair-raising" by the controller. The object matched the description of a UFO "mothership" and appeared to be surrounded by a swarm of lesser craft.

South America Faces the Unknown

Although it may come a surprise to some, in the few years following World War II, Argentina stood on the verge of becoming a world superpower.

According to Spanish aerospace expert Francisco Mañez, a number former Luftwaffe pilots--renowned air aces such as Adolf Galland and Hans Ulrich Rudel--joined the exodus of military talent from post-war Germany to Argentina. Flying wing designer Reimar Horten took his genius along with him, and so did Kurt Tank, director of Focke-Wulf Aviation. They soon found a dictator willing to employ their services: the charismatic and ambitious Juan Perón.

Perón's dream was to harness the newly disclosed secrets of the atom to air power. To achieve this, he hired exiled physicist Ronald Richter and set him up in a nuclear laboratory on the island of Huemul, located in the middle of Nahuel Huapi, the lake known to cryptozoologists for its mysterious marine monster. Richter's efforts were aimed at achieving what is now termed "cold fusion", and in 1951, Perón announced a breakthrough to the world. Under U.S. pressure, Richter was detained and his work stopped, but there were other things at work in the mysterious island of Huemul, such as an atomic engine to power the Argentinean submarine fleet and advanced aircraft such as the IA-38 flying wing, the IA-48 interceptor and the IA-36 transport -- streamlined futuristic aircraft decades ahead of their time. "The winds of silence," writes Máñez in his book *Historias Aeronáuticas* (Spain: Tetragrammaton, 2000) "still blow over Huemul. One can play the tourist and visit the facilities which sheltered the Axis scientists and their mysterious work, but we cannot even cast a glance at the classified papers of Richter or his collaborators--Beck, Haffke, Ehrenberg, Seelman-Eggebert, Greinel, Abele and Pinardi..."

Argentina's "brief, shining moment" as budding superpower ended with the fall of the Perón regime. The new government scrapped all of the Buck Rogerish prototypes and dutifully purchased U.S. made Sabres and DC-3s. Máñez argues that the UFO reports stemming from that part of the Andean range (the cities of Mendoza and Córdoba) are due to the fact that secret testing of these advanced aircraft is still taking place, now under the watchful eyes of the Pentagon. In 1974, a UFO reported by ground crews and controllers at the Bariloche Airport, and photographed by a witness, bears a strong resemblance to the controversial

AVZ-9 Avrocar--a project terminated in 1961--but alive and well and being flown south of the U.S. border.

Whether man-made circular craft are being tested in South America is a subject for another article; the fact remains that the Argentinean military establishment, perhaps much less sophisticated than it might have been unless Juan Perón's dreams come true, has had close encounters of its own with unexplained intruders.

Journalist Alejandro Agostinelli, one of his country's most respected and controversial investigators of the UFO scene, notes that it was in 1952 that the Argentinean Navy, not its Air Force, created its first UFO inquiry agency at the Puerto Belgrano Naval Facility. Three years later, Capt. Jorge Milberg, would translate Maj. Donald Keyhoe's *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*. On July 3, 1960, Capt. Hugo Niotti, seconded to the Underofficer's Training Academy in Cordoba, photographed a conical object flying parallel to the ground that traveled at an estimated 200 kilometers per hour near the vicinity of Yacanto.

At 7:20 p.m. on May 22, 1962 a squadron of fighters in the vicinity of Bahía Blanca's Comandante Espora Naval Base, reported the presence of UFOs along its flight path. The interception lasted 35 minutes. Direct eyewitnesses to this incident were Lt. Rodolfo César Galdós and his student, Roberto Wilkinson. This was the first official acknowledgement of the phenomenon and would lead to the Argentinean Navy's inception of its first Permanent Commission for the Study of the UFO Phenomenon (COPEFO, in Spanish), headed by a team composed of naval officers and journalists. Not to be outdone, the Air Force promptly created its own saucer study group.

In August 1965, the Navy's COPEFO decided to track UFOs using a combination of radar and chase planes from the Punta Indio Aeronaval Base: during one incident, a strange echo was picked up on the radar screen. A Navy interceptor was scrambled after the radar contact, but the UFO repeatedly managed to elude its pursuer. The pilot reported that the object had an "ellipsoid" configuration, having a diameter of some twelve diameter and at one point, coming within two hundred meters of his fighter.

According to author Gustavo Fernández, Argentina has never opted to declassify its UFO files in the way that Spain and the United Kingdom have chosen to, nor has there ever been what he terms "a sincere dialogue between civilian and military personnel aimed at dusting off the cases filed in some government office."

While there is no disputing this assertion, members of the military establishment of some other South American countries can be surprisingly candid about their involvement with unknown aerial craft. In December 2002, journalist Cristián Rizzo of OVNIVISION managed to interview Hernán Gabrielli Rojas, a retired Chilean brigadier general, regarding a colossal UFO over the deserts of northern Chile.

General Gabrielli recalls that in 1978, while conducting a training flight involving a pair of Northrop F-5E Tiger IIs not far from Antofagasta, their radars alerted them to the presence of a mammoth intruder.

"It was noon and I was flying with captain Danilo Catalán--we were both flight instructors," Gabrielli told the

journalist." Accompanying us were avionics tech Fernando Gómez and another trainee. The F-5 is radar-equipped, and a line appeared from side to side--in other words, a trace throughout the bottom side of the screen. A trace for a surface ship, a cruiser, is approximately one centimeter long, but this line went from one side [of the screen] to another. I assumed the radar scope had failed, and I said as much to Danilo Catalán, but his radar also "failed". I then advised the ground radar at Antofagasta and they also picked up the line. We were engaged with these details when we looked toward the east: we were flying from north to south in the vicinity of Mejillones, and saw a deformed cigar-shaped object. Deformed, like a plantain banana. It was swathed in smoke."

The general estimated the size of the craft as being comparable to that of a dozen aircraft carriers. "It was large and must have been some 15 to 20 miles away. It moved in the same direction as us. We had no missiles, guns or anything. As you can imagine, the fright was more or less considerable. We could see a large thing surrounded in smoke, and from which a vapor issued. All of this situation must have lasted some five minutes. We approached the UFO but it was motionless. It neither approached nor retreated--it merely sailed parallel to us. It was quite impressive, because it was truly something strange, and something could be seen in concealment behind the smoke," he recalled.

Although the F-5E's are equipped with gun cameras, the general did not say if any footage had been obtained. The UFO "mothership" eventually vanished, heading toward Easter Island. "The sky cleared and the lines on the radar vanished," he informed Riffo. "However, there had been an object physically flying there. It's not a yarn, let me tell you. It's my only experience with UFOs."

It may be General Gabrielli's only experience, but not the Chilean Air Force (FACH)'s only instance of dealing with the UFO phenomenon. A newswire from Agence France Presse in February 2001 reported that the FACH had turned over classified information regarding UFO sightings to the United States Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). This information would have included sightings in the cities of Arica, Antofagasta and Charanal in Chile's northern regions as well as other cases in the Chilean Antarctic. A stern denial by the military followed--Gen. Ricardo Bermúdez, director of the Comité de Estudios de Fenómenos Aéreos, was quoted as saying during the last International Air and Space Fair held in Santiago de Chile: "The Chilean Air Force has repeatedly stated, to the point of exhaustion, that there are no UFO files."

Uruguay, the smallest of the nations comprising the Southern Cone, puts both of its larger neighbors to shame in this regard. Not only does the country's military establishment manifest its concern over the UFO phenomenon, it has investigated hundreds of reports dating back to the 1930s. Even more surprisingly, Uruguay's CRIDOVNI (which translates as Receiving and Investigating Commission on UFO Claims) agency is a branch of the nation's air force.

The UFO research branch of the Uruguayan Air Force (FAU) can trace its beginnings to an incident which occurred on September 13, 1994, when residents of Paso de las Velas, some 150 km. from Montevideo, allegedly witnessed a UFO crashing into

the ground. The event, which occurred after an electrical storm, caused witnesses to become aware of a solid rectangular object crossing the sky noiselessly. The orange rectangle suddenly plummeted to the ground, setting off an explosion which was heard for many kilometers around. Large plumes of smoke filled the air, but no traces of the object at the putative crash site.

In the light of this case, the Uruguayan Air Force decided to accept all UFO-related information and investigate each case directly. In March 2000, Col. Bernabé Gadea, CRIDOVNI's director, discussed the agency's research methods with Cesar Bianchi, a correspondent for Spain's *El País* newspaper. The setup is in some ways reminiscent of the early Project Blue Book: a three man operation, consisting of Gadea himself, psychologist Carlos Cantonet, and Lt. Col. Ariel Sánchez. UFO reports are dubbed "statements" and the CRIDOVNI troika is quick to state that "There are no UFO investigations taking place anywhere in the world, because we cannot investigate something we cannot identify. For this reason we research claims--the events narrated by the eyewitnesses."

Ancillary to CRIDOVNI's core staff are meteorologists, aeronautical meteorologists, engineers, air traffic controllers, upper atmosphere physicists, psychologists and physicians. "We are Latin America's first official and public commission on the subject," Colonel Gadea informed the *El País* correspondent with certain pride, "and we have advised others, such as Chile's Comision de Estudios de Fenomenos Aereos Anomalos (CEFAA) in 1998." Procedure for the Uruguayan research organization is exacting: should physical evidence of an unknown object be left behind following a collision, for example, the "operations department" is responsible for reaching the point of impact and collecting evidence to be submitted to government ministries dealing with agronomy, mining and nuclear energy.

"We are one of the few countries," said psychologist Cantonet, "where the authorities issue an official reply to the phenomenon, whether we label it as "conventional"--when we can explain it through our scientific evaluation methods to answer the public's questions--or "unconventional" when scientific advances do not allow us to provide an answer."

The Canary Islands -- a hot-spot for UFO sightings and animal mutilations -- are in the news again. José Gregorio Jiménez has the details...

Unidentified Objects Over Tenerife

by José Gregorio Jiménez

On April 17, 2002, a couple and their son witnessed the strange maneuvers of a variety of lights from their home in Tenerife's Barrio El Cardonal. The objects were even caught on tape for a few brief seconds. That night and at the same time, another sighting occurred on the island, which when added to recent cases, leads us to consider that UFO activity in the Canary Islands has re-ignited.

The first observation took place to the northeast of Tenerife, specifically in the region of Acentejo, at 22:40 hours. At that time, a married couple witnessed the presence of two very bright

lights for approximately 15 seconds. The lights were situated vertically and linked by an arch of light which "simulated the curvature of the Moon. The upper one had a yellowish-white hue, emitting a curved focus of lower intensity, which in turn linked to the other object, which was whitish-blue in color," as they told *Año Cero* magazine. The witness claimed that after seeing the sudden apparition of the lights, they also noticed that the lights appeared to form part of the same body or structure. This sighting would have remained merely an anecdote had it not been for the emergence of other witnesses who claimed having witnessed--at the same time and day--a spectacular phenomenon on another part of the island. In this case, a video recording almost 5 minutes long was obtained.

A Set of Lights

The witnesses to the event, a family made up of Lorenzo, Oana and their son Stefan, became aware at 22:50 hours of some strange lights located 20 degrees above the horizon of Santa Cruz. From their window they could see--between the mountains of Taco and the San Matías neighborhood--the swift maneuvers of up to a dozen lights, some of them which remained visible for long periods of time, while others barely remained visible for one second.

"The first to notice was my son, just as I got home. We watched them unaided for a while, then we went to find the video and still cameras. We passed binoculars to each other, and my son recorded those lights which were by no means natural," said Lorenzo, the head of the household.

In short, the observation had a total duration of seven minutes. No photographs were taken although the aforementioned video recording was successful; numerous details were made out through the binoculars and the camcorder's eyepiece.

The recording is sufficiently good so as to allow us to envision the swift movements of some lights, and the singular appearance and disappearance of others, with no more than two lights being visible at the same time at any moment. The video further shows good points of reference, discarding the possibility that the lights could be headlights, steamship floodlights or conventional aircraft. In any event, the witnesses claim that the video only barely captures the movement of the lights, which they claim was far more complex. The drawing shown to us by the son illustrates what he could see through the camcorder eyepiece, and which his parents could confirm through the binoculars: it consisted of a conical shape with an amorphous, poorly defined upper section, whose interior contained up to six sources of high intensity.

In Search of an Explanation

The investigations carried out have allowed us to discard the possibility that weather balloons or conventional astronomic phenomena were found. This last possibility is important, since an unusual alignment of five planets was visible during the month of May. The phenomenon does not jibe with the trajectories of satellites nor with the observation of the International Space Station. The observation remains unexplained.

One of the most haunting and perplexing cases in South America's long ufological tradition involved the goings-on in an Uruguayan ranch. Pablo Villarbia Mausó takes a closer look...

What Happened at La Aurora?

by Pablo Villarubia Mausó

I left Montevideo behind and was heading toward the city of Salto on the Argentinean border, riding a dilapidated bus in order to rescue from oblivion the events which occurred one distant February 17, 1977. The central protagonist of the story was the owner of the La Aurora ranch, a man named Angel María Tonna. The victims included one dog, several sheep, a bull and one horse -- gravely affected by an object come from afar.

The first thing I did upon arriving was making a straight line toward the office of the El Pueblo newspaper to consult old newspapers which would put me on the track of the "Tonna Case". The Saturday the 19th edition was already legendary, since it presented the first news item on the macabre event.

On Sunday, February 13, 1977, at 5:30 a.m., Julio Cesar Rattín, 18, the youngest son of Angel Tonna, witnessed a UFO at a distance of some 150 meters, suspended of a copse of eucalyptus trees. It was light-emitting disk that illuminated a broad swath of countryside. On the following day, Monday at midnight, Tonna's wife, Elena Margarita Rattín, was watching TV before going to bed when a blackout suddenly occurred. Upon going outside to insure the operation of their generator, she noticed an intense glow over La Aurora. Frightened, she ran back into the house.

It was the February 20, 1977 edition that announced half a page saying "UFO in a ranch near the Daymán: Seen on three occasions." The anonymous journalist said that at 04:00 on February 17, Tonna, his children and some farmhands witnessed a strong light coming from behind a shed in which they stored feed. It was then that they saw a "flying saucer" measuring some 3 meters in diameter at an altitude of 15 meters. "The cows were frightened and stampeded, trampling one of the workers; the dogs howled in terror and we couldn't contain our astonishment. I was able to notice that the lights of the farm and the vicinity were totally out and that the generator "coughed", threatening to seize up. The disk moved slowly, almost in a zig-zag motion, and after passing over the pasture pond it headed toward the eucalyptus copse--the same one as on Sunday--and after a while we didn't see it again," Tonna told the journalist.

The journalist interviewed the children and farmhands of the property. All versions agreed. Tonna spoke of the strange prints that had emerged three months ago on the pasture, shaped like a horseshoe 40 to 50 cm wide and with some parts more deeply sunk into the ground than others. It had a diameter of 3 meters and a variety of mushrooms began to grow inside it. At first the grass was burned but another type of grass soon sprang up to replace it. In spite of the assortment of data offered by the

journalistic account, there were even more important elements missing -- some which Angel María Tonna and his people decided not to tell the reporter from El Pueblo.

The Mummified Dogs

It wasn't easy for me to find out more about La Aurora. I asked a few people on the street about the subject, even though 20 years had gone by, the memory of the event was still fresh in the minds of many citizens. Some said it had all been a hoax, a lie, and others believed that it was real and were even aware of the appearance of "unidentifieds" in the region for a few years now. Even luckier ones had also witnessed the transit of "flying saucers" over the county, such as twenty-year old Andrea Carpanesi. "What I am going to tell you took place in early 1997 at around 23:30 hours in front of the house in which I live. I was with my friend Cecilia, and looking northward an intense light appeared. The entire neighborhood was looking at it. It was almost orange in color, making a pendular movement. It lasted five minutes. Seeing such things is commonplace around here," Andrea said.

"Could you find out if it was a satellite or an aircraft?" I inquired.

"I called the weather bureau and I was told that no satellites were flying overhead, nor weather balloons or aircraft. They couldn't tell me what it was, either. But I can tell you something else that's very interesting..."

"Go ahead," I encouraged her.

"Around 1993 I studied at the Universidad de Salto. The word spread that the School of Veterinary Medicine had two very strange dogs. With one of my friends, we sneaked into one of the labs, since it was forbidden to see these animals. I remember it all perfectly because it scared me. We saw a dead dog that had been propped up "alive". It was intact and even looked alive. It was black in color and medium-sized. Some students said that for unknown reasons, both this and another dog which I couldn't see did not decompose or didn't do so with the normal speed associated with death. Furthermore, they added that they had been found at the La Aurora ranch. Nothing further was ever said about the subject," explained Campanesi.

That very same day I headed to the School of Veterinary Medicine. Everything I heard upon asking about dead dogs at La Aurora was a "we don't know" and an almost unbearable silence accompanied by not very friendly glances...

The next step in assembling this puzzle was to find journalist Carlos Ardaix, one of the first to appear after the incidents of February 1977. This man, with a Basque-French surname, welcomed me into his home and told me about his contact with Angel Tonna: "At that time hosted a radio show with a considerable following. It was when Angel Maria Tonna phoned me and said: "If you want to know the truth about La Aurora and why the city's lights went out, come over." I went with two or three people from the radio station. When we arrived Tonna was still rather upset. He told me that at 0400 hours they had seen a light behind the shed and thought that it was on fire. The horses, the dogs...all of the animals were frightened. Tonna walked to some 50 meters of where the apparatus was. It approached slowly and Angel fell to the ground, covering his

face with his arm to avoid the powerful light. Later the object vanished at high speed," the newspaperman explained.

There was talk of burned or severed wires...

"When I reached the ranch the steel wires were still cut and the cables of the electrical facility. The engine's piston broke down, a very expensive breeding bull died slowly...I understand that an autopsy was performed on it at the School of Medicine and no cause of death was established. The same happened to several sheep, whose wool was singed black and left like rough wifer. A very fierce dog that Tonna kept died little by little. Tonna had a skin eruption on the arm that he used to shield his face from the light.

You did not doubt Tonna's information?

No, he seemed very sincere. In any event, as a journalist, I tried to find other witnesses. One of the farmhands had already seen something similar near the site. I visited other farms near La Aurora, sicne i thought a local may have seen the UFO. I asked a foreman and he told me hadn't seen anything at night. As we walked out, a farmhand chopping wood told me: "We all saw what happened at night, but we were forbidden to speak of it." After that we transmitted Tonna's recording over the air. There was a chain reaction. Many people started visiting the site, like those Americans who wanted to take him back to the U.S. for testing.

Do you recall who these men were?

No. It was said at the time that they were from NASA, but I'm not sure. I think there was an American journalist [among them]. At the time the Salto Grande dam was being built and there were Japanese engineers staying at the farm. One physician--Dr. Menoni--discovered through some photographs that there was considerable radiation in the trees at La Aurora. The Japanese confirmed it on their measurment devices.

What about the burns on Tonna's arm?

It was a burn that would reoccur sporadically. The electrocardiogram machine wouldn't work when the electrodes would be placed on him. That's what two doctors I know told me. After two years the burns began to fade. It was something truly strange that couldn't have had something to do with radiation.

So..what about the blackouts?

No one has been able to explain why there were so many blackouts in 1977. On the night on which the events played out in La Aurora there was a half-hour long blackout. In following days there were others, always whenever UFOs appeared.

Could there have been somtehing more behind the events? Human manipulation perhaps?

Never! I can tell you that the breeding bull he had died, and it was worth a fortune. That wasn't a joke. The pedigree horse didn't die...he was a stud and was rendered sterile.

Is it true that the ranch became a place of pilgrimage?

Yes, but Angel Tonna, in recent years, is sick of receiving callers and has chosen not to let anyone in and to refuse interviews. I understand, because he wants to work normally, look after his animals and his property. So many people came from all over the world came, like American ufologists James Hurtak and Bob Pratt, Pedro Romaniuk from Argentina. Tonna showed me a letter in which Antonio Ribera claimed to be interested in visiting La Aurora but he couldn't come. The most controversial was a visit by Neil Armstrong, the first man on

the Moon. No one knows why he visited...

And to these pilgrimages still go on?

Sometimes entire buses of people come seeking cures. Yes, they think the place was blessed by a supernatural force. It was decided to build a crypt to Padre Pío there and don't ask me why. The people who find the warning sign advising them to stay away from La Aurora cross the road where they find the chapel of the priest that makes miracles, healings...

Radioactivity on the Farm

On the following day I tried contacting Tonna and his relatives using the phone numbers featured in the local directory. After some frustrated events, I managed to speak to one of his sons, the veterinarian, and he told me that his father no longer spoke of Angel Tonna. The matter was closed for him.

My only alternative was to open other fronts. One of these was to locate doctor Juan María Menoni, the same one who took photographs in the area which showed traces of radiation. "I'm not a ufologist," he said, "but I became interested in the case at the time. When I visited the site, I found that part of the fence had been melted. The generator and the motor had burned out. I took a sample of tree bark that had been burned by the UFO. A photographer friend suggested that I place the piece of bark over a strip of 35mm film. When we developed the film some strange spots appeared on the film.

Without a word, Menoni went to his office and returned with some photo enlargements which showed the result of the vegetable matter's exposure. "It's curious. It seemed to be charged with radiation, but where was the radiation coming from? It must've been from the mysterious flying saucer."

A few days later, in Buenos Aires, I had an interview with famous parapsychologist and ufologist Antonio Las Heras, who had visited La Aurora in 1978 to look into the case. "What happened there drew my attention. I saw the trees, the toppled eucalyptuses, almost uprooted, as though a giant hand had played with them. I saw the branches ripped off by a UFO's effects. In fact, they looked like someone had smashed them, making them tumble over and over. I found calcined rock with vitreous formation on the sandstone. For vitrification to occur, the temperatures must be in excess of a thousand degrees [Centigrade]. I saw giant mushrooms measuring a meter and a half in diameter, standing inside the strange marks left by the UFOs. Only radiation could have mutated those living organisms."

Las Heras told me that Tonna had been accompanied by a police dog that fateful night. "The animal died three days later. They said that it had no blood, as though it had been absorbed through its flesh, which had developed an inconsistent appearance, like flesh that has been boiled. The dog's skin was burned in several places and its tail hairs were bristled like wire. No one was able to offer a diagnosis for what occurred," he said, shaking his head.

"What happened to the bull?" I asked, trying to avoid showing

surprise at his words.

"It was a show animal of great value and it died with the very same symptoms as the dog, but after a week. The horse--a stallion--was left sterile. The sheep deaths were also mysterious: they had a sort of band around their bodies which passed through their withers. IT was really a burned patch, as though a branding iron had been applied, according to Tonna."

That made me react, associating the facts with the enigmatic manifestationsof the infamous Chupacabras, but much later, in the mid-Nineties. A large amount of farm animals turned up dead in several Latin American countries, generally bled dry, attacked by an unknown creature or force.

Uruguayan ufologist Jorge Monsalve, whom I couldn't locate, also interviewed Tonna around the time. In his book Encuentros Cercanos con OVNIS (Montevideo, 1995), Monsalve explains how he arrived in time to see the Normandy bull, imported from France, still alive. Tonna asked the man to touch the animal's horns: "That being said, I extended my hand and [the horn] practically crumbled in my fingers. A sad and disagreeable experience."

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